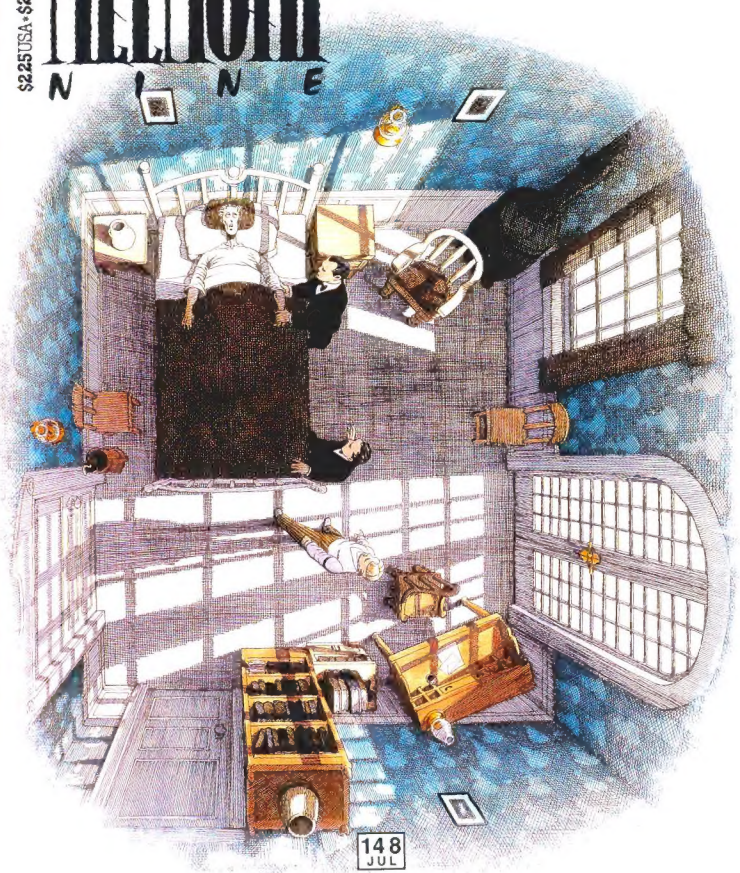
ISSN 0712-7774

CEREBUS

MELMOTH

NINE

$2.25USA • $2.75CANADA • £1.25UK



148
JUL

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

It's time for "Oscar Wilde: A Summing Up". I'm sure I'll fail as miserably as Alfred Douglas did in his book of the same name, but I do want to say something—or a few somethings—having reached the end of two and a half years of 'doing' the character.

I remember one particular day when we'd been working for a few hours in characteristic silence, Ger was drawing the "Whistler's Mother" painting in Oscar's house and he suddenly asked, with an edge of irritation in his voice, "So was Whistler a pillow-biter, too?" I laughed and had to confess that I didn't know. I started to say something about 'I think he was married' but remembered that Oscar had been married. I said I thought he had kids, and remembered Cyril and Vyvyan (later Vivian). The arcane world of the homosexual. Quite an education it was for a naive fellow like myself. I had read three or four biographies and I had thought to myself how nice it was that Oscar had all of these bright young men in his life to discuss literature with and buy dinners and cigarette cases for. It wasn't until I read the *Secret Life Of Oscar Wilde* that I went, "Oh, dear." His line about "feasting with panthers" I thought was awfully good; noble beasts, literary type types. *Secret Life* made it clear that this was a reference to the "rough trade" he had switched to after the relationship with Douglas changed back to platonic. 'Renters' as they were called; the squalor and poverty of Victorian London having produced an underclass of those willing and available for a handful of coins. Or in Oscar's case, sumptuous meals in private dining rooms, complete with iced champagne. He confesses in one of the biographies (don't remember which one) that after a time he sought out partners of the lowest, filthiest kind. It *must* have seemed like feeding time at the zoo. Some nineteen or twenty-year-old criminal who hadn't eaten in days, presented with a perfectly prepared mutton dish or roast of beef. Plied with champagne in a room with pink lampshades.

I mean, you have to laugh.

How far from one of the first books I read. *Oscar Wilde in Canada* (really!). The bright young lad of twenty-eight touring Canada and the U.S. so that people going to see "Patience" would understand what Gilbert and Sullivan were making fun of. The author even managed to reconstruct a couple of the lectures Oscar gave; "The House Beautiful" and "the Ethics of Art". When it came time to design Oscar's house in *Jaka's Story*, I just gave Ger "The House Beautiful" lecture in photo-copy form. Here. Like this.

I mean, it's all cobbled together Pater knock-offs and *homages* to Ruskin. I read Pater and Ruskin to get an idea of what was Oscar and what was borrowed and found I preferred the 'The House Beautiful' lecture to most of Pater's essays and almost all of Ruskin's. But when you put the two portraits side-by-side; the delicate youth of 1882 looking like a picture of Jeff Jones by Barry Windsor-Smith and the decayed, flabby human wreckage of Toulouse Lautrec's portraits, you have to ask yourself "What went wrong?" Alan Moore is mining the same vein with "From Hell", I find. It is as if the British Empire transformed itself between the mid to late Victorian periods. Everything and everyone turned upside-down and sideways and nowhere more profoundly and completely than in London; the toppermost of the poppermost.

The more I learned about Oscar, the more I resented his lack of productivity. Aside from one really good play ("Importance of Being Earnest") and one really good short novel ("The Picture of Dorian Gray"), most of his work is derivative or second rate. *I* like it but I think I'm objective enough to admit that very little of what he did stands the test of time for most people. I resent the fact that most of his time was spent entertaining second and third-rate intellects; or even more loathsome, the aristocracy. He is almost universally acknowledged as the greatest conversationalist of his day. In a time when the ability to hold the attention of a table of diners was a thing for which many were noted, Oscar reigned supreme. Only a handful of his stories, anecdotes and discourses have survived even as fragments (thanks mostly to the Roberts; Sherard and Ross, and Richard le Gallienne).

And, yet, that was Oscar wasn't it?

How much better to entertain a roomful of strangers, lingering over a bottle of good wine and innumerable cigarettes, playing with notions and ideas, weaving epigrams and fables; striking just the right note with each companion so that even those who were the most scornful of him, who had arrived determined to despise him and to revile him, found themselves smiling, then laughing; charmed, captivated; having the time of their lives.

How much better that, than seclusion and study. Why be prolific when one could be charming? Why produce when there's so much to consume?

I have to credit all the research that I did on Oscar Wilde for convincing me that I don't want to be like that. If I can end my life with a large body of completed works and a reputation as a cantankerous old hermit I'll consider my time well spent.

Next: More.

CEREBUS

NO. 148 JULY 1991

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MELMOTH
a short story

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(Cerebus 139 to Cerebus 150)

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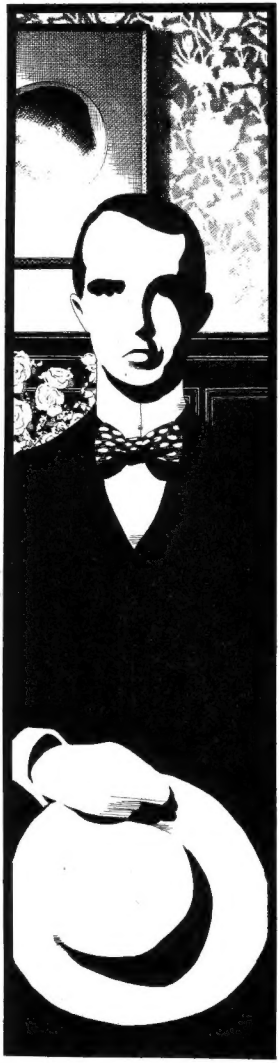
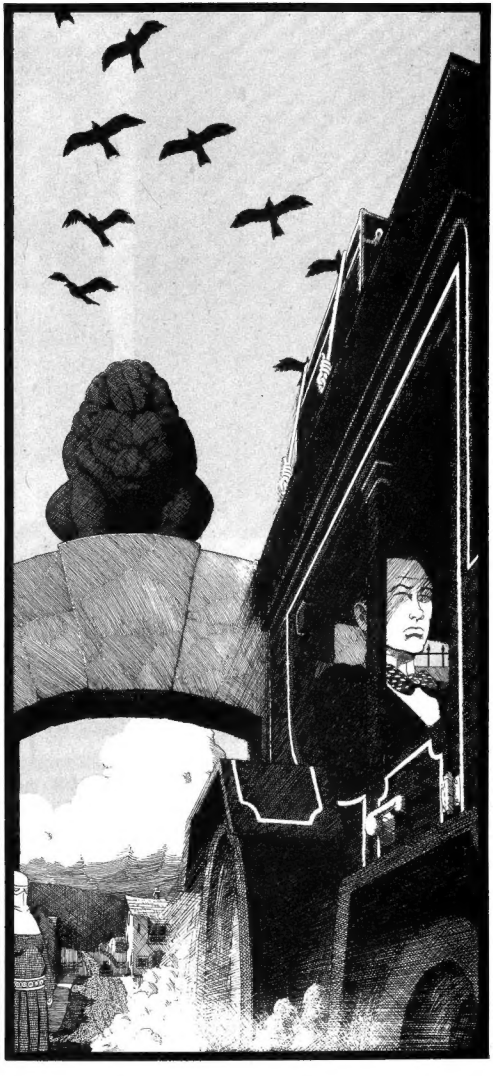
During my absence Reggie went every day to see Oscar and wrote me short bulletins every other day. Oscar went out several times with him and seemed much better. Early, that last week, I received the first of Reggie's letters which I enclose (the others came after I had started) and I started back for Iest.

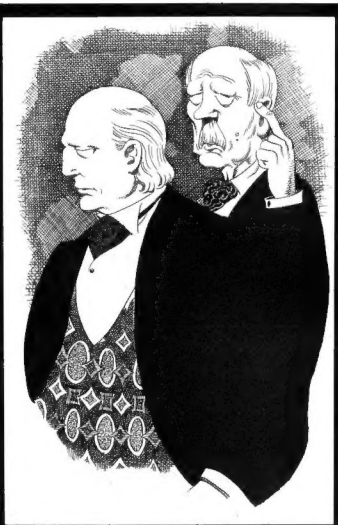


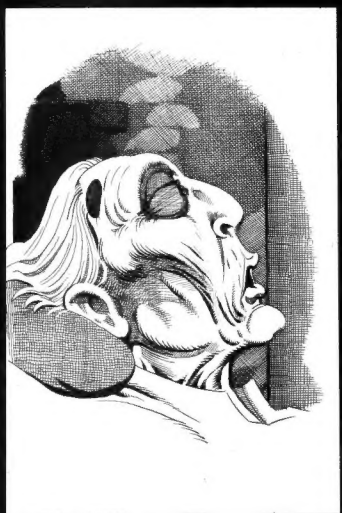
I send them because they will give you a very good idea of how things stood. I had decided that when I had moved my mother to Menton at week's end, I would go to Iest next day, but mid-week at 5.30 I got a message from Reggie saying "almost hopeless."

I just caught the express and arrived in Iest at 10.20 in the morning.

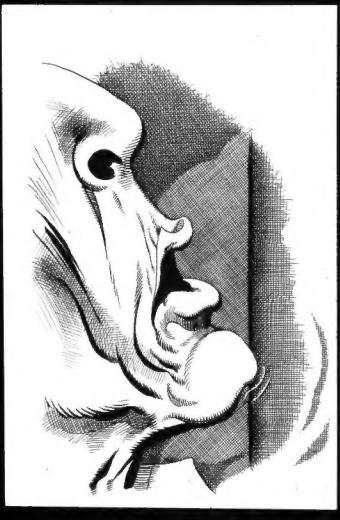


Dr. Tucker and Dr. Kleiss, a specialist called in by Reggie were there. They informed me that Oscar could not live more than two days.



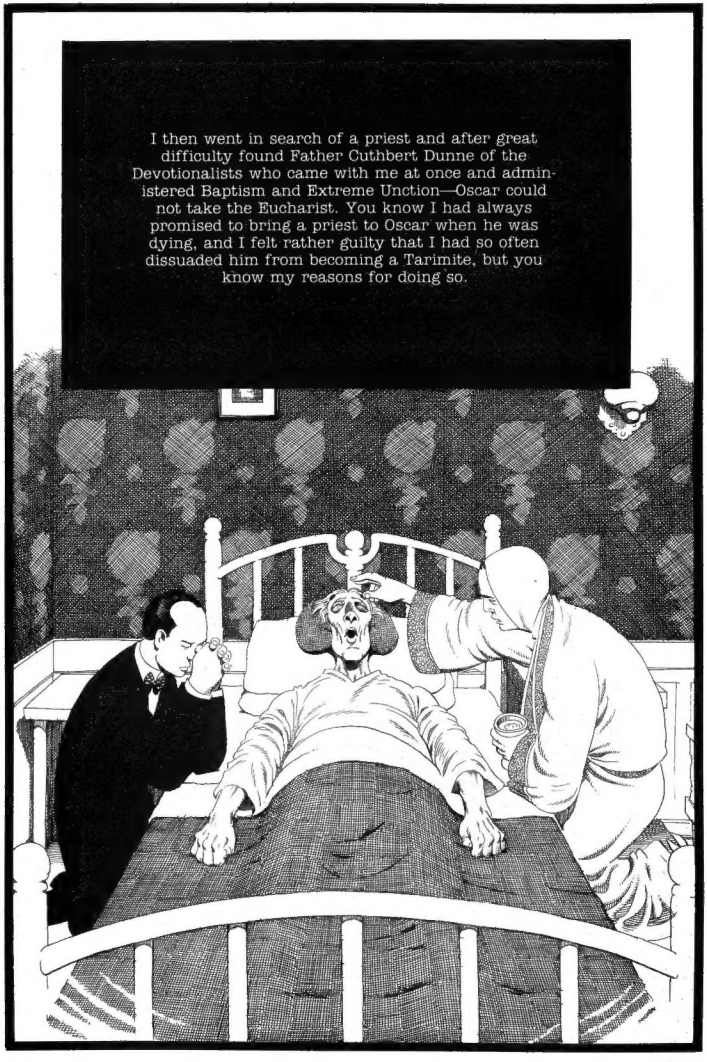


His appearance was very painful, he had become quite thin, the flesh was livid, his breathing heavy.



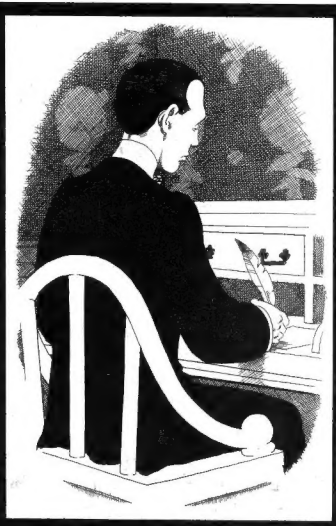
He was
trying
to speak.

He was conscious
that people were
in the room, and
raised his hand when
I asked him
whether he
understood.

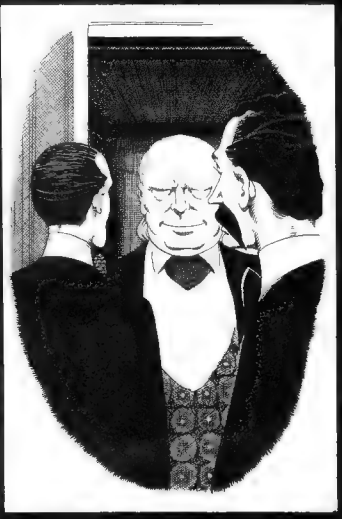

I then went in search of a priest and after great difficulty found Father Cuthbert Dunne of the Devotionalists who came with me at once and administered Baptism and Extreme Unction—Oscar could not take the Eucharist. You know I had always promised to bring a priest to Oscar when he was dying, and I felt rather guilty that I had so often dissuaded him from becoming a Tarimite, but you know my reasons for doing so.

'By this holy anointing and his most gracious mercy, may the Lord pardon you the sins you have committed'
'with your sight'
'your hearing'
'your breath'
'your taste'
'your touch'
'and your tread'
'BLESSED BE OUR LORD'
'Blessed be his infinite mercy'
'May he grant you absolution and life ever-lasting.'
'Amen.'

I then sent letters to Frank Harris, to Holman (for communicating with Adrian Hope)

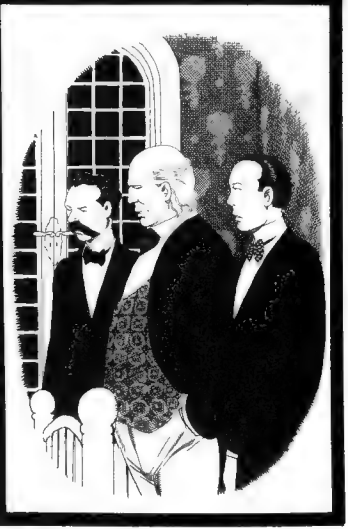


and to Douglas.



Tucker called again later

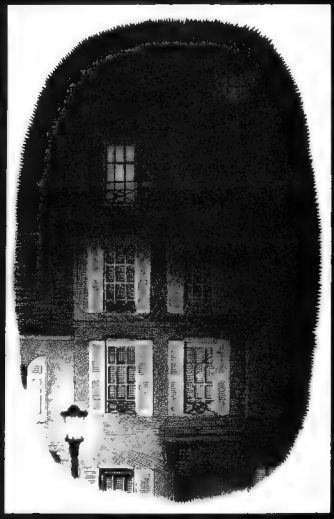
and said that Oscar might linger a few days.

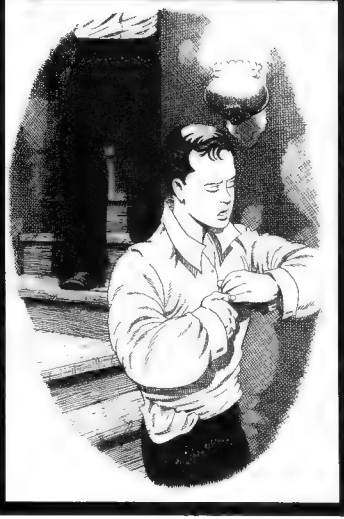


Terrible offices had to be carried out into which I need not enter.

Reggie was a perfect wreck.

He and I slept at the Hotel d'Alsace that night in a room upstairs.





We were called twice by the nurse who thought Oscar was actually dying.

About 5.30 in the morning a complete change came over him, the lines of the face altered and I believe what is called the death rattle began.

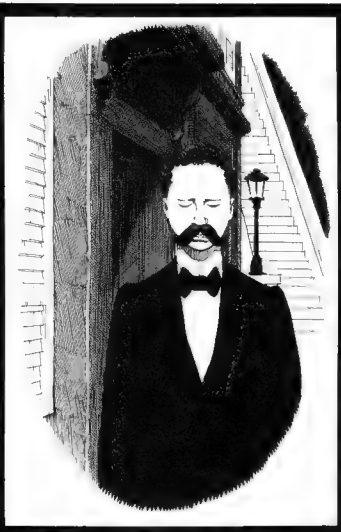
I had never heard anything like it before.

It sounded like the horrible turning of a crank and it never ceased until the end.

His eyes did not respond to the light test any longer.

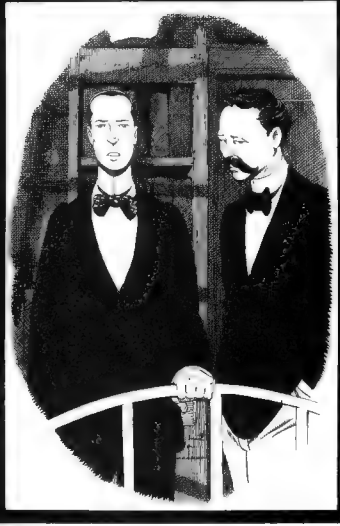
Foam and blood came from his mouth and had to be wiped away by someone standing by him all the time.

At noon, I went out to get some food, Reggie mounting guard.

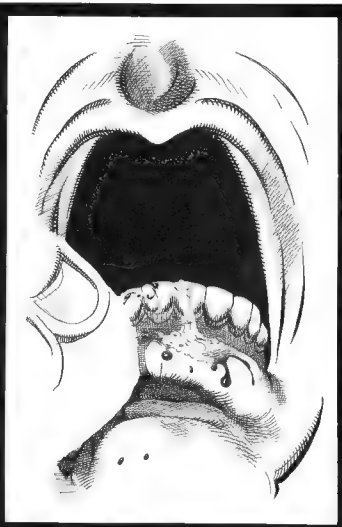


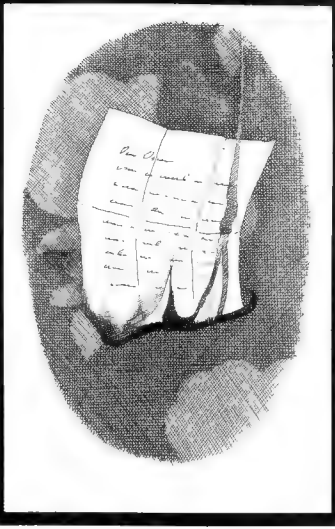
He went
out at
12.30.

From
one o'clock
we did not leave
the room.

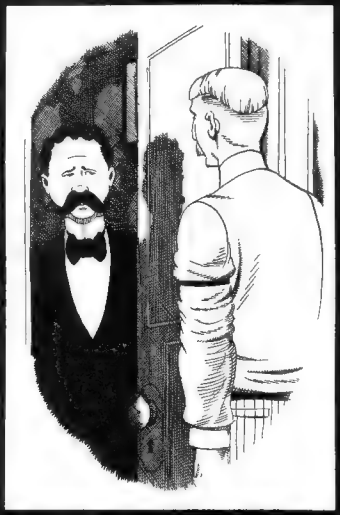


The painful noise from the throat became louder and louder.





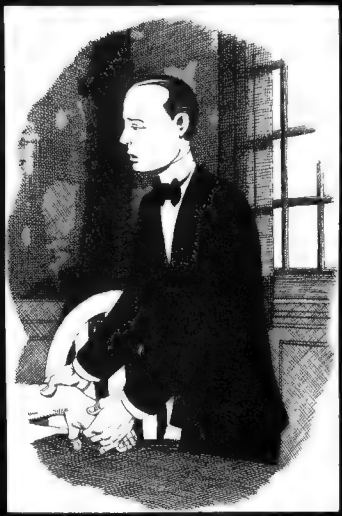
Reggie and I destroyed letters to keep ourselves from breaking down.



The nurse was out and the proprietor of the hotel had come up to take his place

At 1.45 the time of his breathing altered. I went to the bedside and held his hand

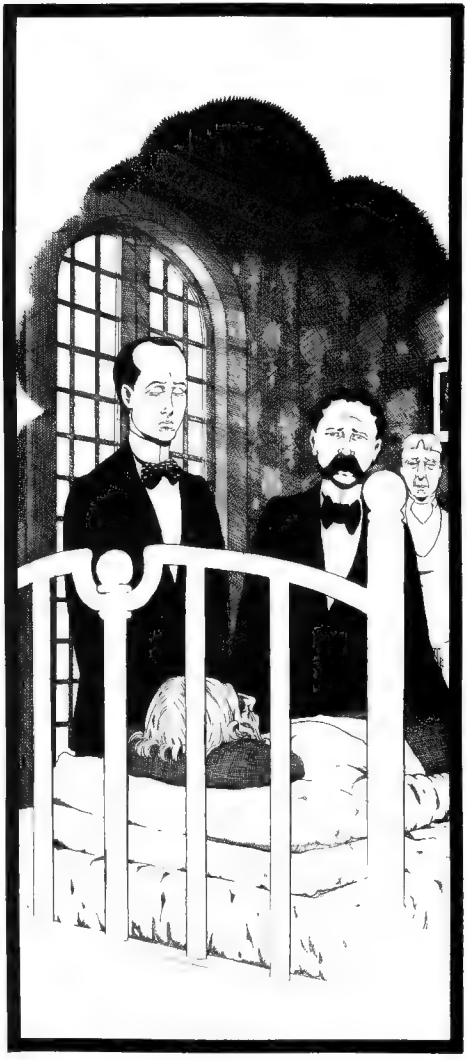
His pulse began to flutter



He heaved a deep sigh: the only natural one I had heard since I arrived.

The limbs seemed to stretch involuntarily, the breathing became fainter.

He passed
at ten minutes
to two
exactly.



AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dear Dave,

For the past two weeks, I have visited the Eatontown branch of the Monmouth Public Library at precisely 3:00 AM (except on days I work or am at class) and have masturbated behind the law stack. I tell you and comicdom this for no other reason than to see if I can get Chris Romano (#144) to pop an arterial vein.

I wonder what I would do if I were king of America and could make my own laws with an executive branch to enforce them? Certainly I would ammend the form of government to a democracy, for democracies rock the house as far as I'm concerned. My answer misses of course the flavor of the question I was asking myself.

The question of the difference between ideals and practice mentioned in issue #144 is an interesting one. For instance, I do not think all people are equal (I am superior to most). Nonetheless, I think that all people should be given respect and equal treatment under the law. This is not because I am the equal of Ted Bundy, Margaret Thatcher, or Dave Sim, but because this appears the best way to run an equitable society.

Men and women are not equal. Men have dicks and girls don't. We can rape women and they, for all practical purposes, can't rape us. What can be done about this? In one sense nothing—anatomical fact is anatomical fact. Laws ought level the ground, but with a ground so uneven this proves difficult.

Here is my theory on inequality. If you are oppressed you can do several things: 1) Sit back and take it. 2) Demand reparations. 3) Strive with dignity to make a go of it despite injustice. Option 1 is lame. Option 2 is just as damning as option 1 in many ways, for you rely upon your captor to make things even, putting even more power in your captor's hands, and lessening your own ability to level the field by passing the buck. Option 3 is the path of DuBois, Brandeis, and King. It levels the field by improving the players. One should always aim for excellence, and option 3 gives one the best chance, for one can best motivate one's self to excel, whereas option 2 motivates your opponents to excel and you don't know a) if they will, and b) if they do, will they help you?

Applying this reasoning to feminism, one ought to encourage women to excel. This isn't enough. One should provide a disincentive to those who would interfere with women's pursuit of excellence, i.e., through anti-rape and anti-discrimination laws. One should avoid, however, letting women feel entitled by giving them benefits for making serious life-affecting choices which carry their own consequences. Raising children is costly. By making child-care an entitlement, one obscures and diffuses the costs. By making everybody pay for it, rather than the woman, the woman does not have to weigh the actual costs. Whenever one skews the costs like this there is waste, and a tendency to make cost-ineffective judgements will occur. Maybe our society would be stronger if women were encouraged to raise only children they can afford.

A stronger society is not necessarily what is most desired by me. I think that in real situations mercy and compassion ought to be shown. Overly austere measures cause unnecessary pain and anguish. One must guarantee, however, that in giving mercy one does not smother the group you aid. Welfare, in the time of F.D.R. was a good idea, for it helped those who could not help themselves. Many people who received welfare then needed it to get to their feet. Now, more and more, we see families slaves to the welfare system. Obviously, what is needed is a blend of compassion and discipline. This is beyond the power of law, and must be carried out by wise individuals within the framework of sound law fitted to the time and situation.

This is why democracies are so important. Laws can be adapted to fit situations, for policies can be altered peacefully. Although my views are conservative, I vote democratic, for the Democrats more often have heart and compassion, even though the Republicans tend to build a stronger America. When one must choose between strength and mercy, it is my inclination to err towards mercy.

So how would I legislate? I don't know, it all depends on the situations. On feminist issues I do not have the appropriate statistics and reports to say for sure. I would probably appoint a minister, form a committee or research it myself. My tendency would be to be harsh on sexual offenders and sexist bigots, while allowing them enough defense so as to avoid Potiphar's wife type incidents. On child-care issues, I would need more statistics, but I would make it clear that women must bear some responsibility for raising their children and also make certain that kids are cared for in the best way possible.

Neither Dave Sim nor I are legislators, and thus we wield limited power. Our statements can be useful (as can those of anyone else who does not set policy) in provoking thought even if they would not be excellent policy. Clearly the more one considers the effects of a given law or policy, the more qualified one will be to make decisions concerning it. To the lawmakers falls the incredibly awesome responsibility of forming the laws which shape our lives. It is our civic responsibility to pay attention to all facts surrounding an issue even if they seemingly conflict with our ideology. We may have to alter our ideology, or we may find our views even more strongly confirmed, but either way we are in a better position to judge.

This may have been a bit jumbled, disordered, and redundant, but what the Nifleheim—it's just a letter, not a term paper.

Here is the Dave Auer theory of Aardvark Comment. It is based on the following assumptions: 1) You (Dave Sim, in case you've forgotten who you are) publish letters that fit together as a whole—the letters ought to compliment and contrast one another. In order to make the column diverse, you must pick a cross-section, yet to make it

interesting a thread of continuity is to be desired across various published letters. 2) One is not privy to other persons' letters. 3) This is not actually an assumption, but rather a synthesis of the prior two assumptions: One cannot produce a publishable letter.

I like to think that assumption 2 is somewhat false and that thus conclusion 3 is somewhat false, and that the fact that two of my letters *will* be published is more than mere coincidence. This may be simply a case of extreme ego (indicating insecurity of deeper self, for I place such value on such external and whimsical criterion), or have a grain of truth to it, or both. Perhaps the admission of both possibilities is the sign of a person with an open mind or someone who is hedging his bets or someone who does want to appear arrogant in a public forum. If the latest is the case, it appears that I have failed unless you decide not to print my letter. If you print my letter, I feel that I will be forced to alter my masturbatory patterns, but I have faced graver disruptions in my life, and feel I could handle this one as well.

Peace,

Dave S. Auer
25 Crane Court
Middletown, NJ
USA 07748

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

Connie L's real name is **MARIE.**

Thought you'd like to know.

Love,

Satan.

★★★★★★★★★★

Hi Dave,

I was sitting here, wracking my brains on the screenplay I've been re-writing for the last year when I skimmed through your 'Note From The Prez' Ish #144.

Youse usin' "cunt" instead of "bitch" these days? Hmmm. Know what Dave? You sound like a man with a broken heart.

Believe me, I know, I tried my hand at the local personal columns and was dumped twelve times straight. I really hated broads' guts after that. On the other hand, I did get laid for the first time in four years.

I think you'd best go out and find yourself a new filly, amigo. Before you go from a bitter thirty-something year old to a bitter fifty year old. Take it from me, Davey, I'm the bhagwan of heartbreak.

And never forget, women can make you wanna blow your brains out but they're still a lotta laughs.

Your Fan 'N' Friend,

James Ricardo
1070 Arlington Lane
San Jose, CA
USA 95129

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave:

I don't like to categorize things, for the most part. Despite that I was trying to decide who were the best cartoonists of all time. I'm talking about comic books—not comic strips. And I'm excluding "illustrators". Here's the list, more or less in chronological order:

- Will Eisner
- Harvey Kurtzman
- Robert Crumb
- Moebius
- Art Spiegelman
- Dave Sim (I'm serious)
- Jaime & Gilbert Hernandez

The only person who does not write and draw his work that I would also place on the list is:

- Harvey Pekar

I feel he's been of enough importance as a writer to justify placing him with the others.

I haven't placed people like Dan Clowes, Chester Brown, Pete Bagge, etc. They're certainly the best of the generation, but that generation is still forming. I would need more time to squarely gauge their accomplishments.

What do you think?

Sincerely,

Jeffrey A. Meyer
8307 Hugueward Rd.
Fort Wayne, Indiana
USA 46818

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I was going to type up a manuscript for a short story contest that the Calgary Herald is having. So why am I writing to you? Is it because I am a long-time Cerebus reader? No. Is it because I am moved by the lyrical realism of every panel of Melmoth? No. Is it because of the way you capture that 'look' in the aardvark's eyes as he clutches that doll? Sort of . . . but no. Is it because writing letters to comic book creators is the only true form of self expression that I know? No. I don't write to comics; I'm an adult, eh? (Well actually I did write to Animal Man when Grant Morrison left, but that doesn't count, because I just remembered now.)

The reason why I am sitting and writing to you is because it is late at night and I am waiting for a phone call from Lori. Actually, I'm not exactly 'sitting' and writing to you: I'm mostly pacing back and forth across my basement-suite-brown carpet, inhaling shallow, hurtful, breaths of air, stopping periodically to type a few words or to flip over my R.E.M. tape

I've only really known Lori for about a week . . . Tonight I've totally lost it . . .

I'm obsessed. I'm depressed. I'm desperate.

Maybe that's why I am writing to you. I hope that you print this, it will be a good lesson for me. I'm nuts . . .

I'm sorry Dave, but I am keeping something from you. I can't tell you what it is. Maybe later. Why the hell am I writing to you? I don't even know you. I'm nuts.

Everything is connected, Dave.

Thanks for listening:

Murray Gaetz
103, 1608 22 Ave., S.W.
Calgary, Alberta
T2T 0R8

She just phoned. I don't care if you print this anymore . . . I'm O.K. now, Dave.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

As an opener, a moment of awkwardness. Having recently married, I hadn't gotten around to indulging my wife in my one graphic obsession, Cerebus. Inevitably, I left an issue lying on the couch, and the wife decided she would pick it up and see your handiwork for herself. Unfortunately, it was "Melmoth Zero". Nineteen pages of Normalroach sitting at Dino's saying little more than "fucking cunts" did little to impress her.

I spent the next couple of hours defending your individualism, praising your artistic talent, espousing your wit, and assuring her I wasn't wasting my hard earned dollars. And while acclaiming your works, it occured to me that "Melmoth Zero" wasn't all that funny. Then again, maybe it wasn't intended to be.

And now the real purpose of this letter, to ask a question. Does the

song "No Sugar Tonight/New Mother Nature" by the Guess Who (of Canadian origin) have any bearing on the plotline of Cerebus? I have reproduced the relevant lyrics below. (Having no lyric sheet to copy, these may not be 100% accurate).

Jaka says yes, and I believe 'em
when we talk about the things I say
She hasn't got the faith or the guts
to leave him
when they're standing in each
other's way.

You're tripping back now to places
you been to,
you wonder what you're gonna find.
You know you've been wrong, but
it won't be long
before you leave 'em all far behind.

It's the new mother nature
taking over
It's the new splendid lady come
to call
It's the new mother nature
taking over
She's getting us all.

Jaka said "No" when I came
back last time,
it's looking like I lost a friend.
No use calling 'cause the sky is
falling
and I'm getting pretty near the end.

Smoke filled room in a corner
basement,
the situation must be right.
Bag of goodies and a bottle of wine,
we're gonna get it on right tonight.

There seem to be references to Cerebus's ascension, Cirin's invasion of Iest, and the two mentions of Jaka are frighteningly close to Cerebus & Jaka's first two encounters. Perhaps this is all coincidence. Then again, maybe not.

Wonderingly,

Ken Norton
Madison, WI

★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I started Cerebus with the reprint series. I love it. I waited for Jaka's Story to end (not wanting to come in in the middle). When Melmoth started I figured I could get in on the ground floor of where Cerebus is presently.

Needless to say (but said anyway), I spent a few issues waiting for the current Cerebus to actually show up. The Melmoth story is very slow-paced, but extremely well-paced. I find myself taking more time with each page, paying more attention to the artwork. Sometimes I just stare at Oscar's wallpaper. The most minor characters are perfectly done. Pigeons doing pigeon things, and the young teenage girl being her shy, sympathetic, curious self. Anyway, I'm writing about 144, but not really.

I'm writing about this other thing. This "thing". You know it. It resides at the end of the Cerebus story, a letters page (nay, booklet) of imposing proportions. I started to read a similar one after Melmoth Zero. I read the first page, then I turned the page to find more, then I kept on turning pages. I promptly skipped to the end of it. "I can't read all that" I said to myself, "and why would I want to" I did not even approach it again until Melmoth Five, where I got this crazy notion to see if I could read the whole thing. Many of them say nothing about Cerebus at all, just feminism and masturbation and cheese dip. It's like a little social club of letters. It wasn't dull. You see, I thought it would be dull, people gabbing on about Godknowswhat for an entire text page. I think I'll continue to read it, and perhaps try and contribute.

Sincerely,

Matt Tauber
Moore Hall N310
400 S. Rotherwood Avenue
Evansville, IN
USA 47714

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave-

Did you ever have one of those days when you wanted to find Madonna, chain her to the bumper of your truck, drag her 6 to 700 yards through the mud, TEAR off her clothes, flip her over, fuck her up the ass, cum on her back, soak her in gas and light her on fire?

Just wondering.

Charles W. Smith
R2
Linton, IN
USA 47441

P.S. Is the poor little bastard going to snap out of it, or is 'Mothers and Daughters' going to happen in Dino's?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I have been reading Cerebus since issue 44 which Scott Delbusso lent me just after it came out. That makes 100 issues that we've been through together. Thanks!

Your comic has kept me sane through four relationships, a 6 year tour with the Navy, and two colleges. Nothing yet has beat the impact of 100 on me though. I got that issue just before I started one of my bi-annual rereads. I had read 1-94 the night before but that had not prepared me for 100. After I had read the remaining 6 all I could say was holy shit! If I had not been hooked before just that issue hooked me for the remaining 200. Issue 51 was also a great one. Thanks for reprinting it so I can share it with my friends. *Jaka's Story* was good but I would still rate it a notch below *High Society* and *Church & State*. I know it was a poor letter, fellow commenters, but it was my first try.

Blue skies,

Dirk Heinz
2915 Redgrove Drive
Palm Bay, FL
USA 32905

★★★★★★★★★★

O.K., here's the deal.

I'm not totally sure why I would tell you this, but misery loves company and only people who would read your letter column (that I know) already know this. At the moment I should be paying bills or something worthwhile but helplessly pre-yuppie, but I keep trying to fight it. I'm starting to hate my life and the direction that it is taking. There is no pleasure in anything anymore, and I am too much of a coward to do anything about it. I'm not a perennially alone comic-reading weirdo, but I'm not the god of love and togetherness either.

Now that the whining is over, a little history. I started to read Cerebus when my friend Chris dropped three of the phone books on my desk. I have introduced two other people to Cerebus in the same way. Cerebus helps. I think that I hate my job, and I can't trust any of the miscreants around me, and then I read *Church and State*.

I am going out with a girl whom I do not love and I suspect does not love me either. She is using me for an unadmitted reason, and I am using her to fill the void of a previous love. I think I'm a fool. I think I'm alone in this regard, and then I read *Jaka's Story*.

The point to it all is this; I'm trying to decide if I have the guts to drop out of a neo-yuppie lifestyle and try something a bit freer. At the same time I have spent three years trying to figure out where you were coming from in your editorials. I

know what it means to me: The benefits and rewards of being independent go hand in hand with the risks. One of the risks you take is telling people how you feel. In what seems to be a majority of responses, people feel a need to disagree with you. I am not taking a stance to agree or disagree, only to tell you that I appreciate the risk.

Sorry this isn't the most original thing that has been written to you (or creative or philosophical), but I waited three years to think of something better. This just had to be let out.

L.E. Manekin
11340 S.W. 102 Ct.
Miami, FL
USA 33176

P.S. For the record; I'm not a feminist or anti-feminist, just a free thinker who likes to approach people as individuals. However, I know you don't regularly do it, but I would love to know if you would consider selling your art-work (though I would understand if you don't.)

Whatever happened to being your own person? Not a radical free thinker and not a sheep in the crowd, but answering and harming only yourself.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave -

I'm back in San Francisco and I've just finished the pile Nicole has bought and saved for me. Read all the *Eightballs*, all the *Zotz*, all the *Jams*, all the *Nexi*, all the *Hellblazers* (Nicole likes it), all the *Hates*, the *Bad Girls*, *Birdlands*, *Deadworlds*, *Dirty Plotte's*, *Graffix Muziks*, and the one *Love & Rockets* and *Flaming Carrot*, so now, days later, I'm left drained and oddly hollow with nothing left but Aardvark Comment—(unless I break down and actually *read* Melmoth before 150 is out)—it seemed far too much to consider at first—all those damn letters—but, now that I've eaten thru everything else, I nibble at them gleefully.

The reason I write is that I just read a letter from a Jeff Kramer with a S.F. address who tells me to "Feel Free to drop by" so, while I'm here, I think I will.

Nicole leaves tonight for the weekend—she works at a Renaissance Fair somewhere outside L.A.—and will return late Sunday night. I'm staying at her place while in town. The reason I'm here is to move all my shit (mostly comics) out of her apartment and to say good-bye. It's over, Dave. Six years and done. She keeps extending my stay, but I have to get out of here. Now the question is—do I go for the job on the Fishing tender off Bristol Bay or do I hang with all my old school buddies in Boston for one more summer of barbeques, shorts and stupifying blasts of intoxication? You don't have to answer. The choice is mine.

Actually the reason I write is that KUSF just played Johnnie Mathis' 'Chances Are' (which came as quite a surprise following Primus), which, hackneyed a concept as it is, was (is) Nicole's and my "song". We get all horny-eyed and soupy whenever we hear it. And here I'm in her bed (she's off at her day job) thinking of visiting Mr. Kramer (where the hell is Lexington St. anyway?) and smelling the sheets.

Oh, and so far (granted I've got nearly 4 issues of Comment to get thru yet) but so far no one has mentioned how Fucking Funny "Like-a-Looks" was. Dave . . . it was Fucking Funny. As good as you are at carefully paced (I mean lengthy) drama, your fuel-injected comedy is the balls.

Robert Lavender

Here and There

P.S. to Lesley Wheeler who's "Still reading"

- what do you mean "We're not anymore sure than Oscar why Jaka does dance, what she thinks *she's* doing"? I think you are over-analyzing. She dances to dance. It *feels* good. As you say, it's her art. Where she dances, and for whom just doesn't matter. It puts her in touch with something inside of herself that nothing else can come near. And if she can get some groceries out of it, so much the better. I don't think Jaka sees the customers as "passively aroused male voyeurs". And even if they do begin (or continue afterward) that way, I think they are elevated to something beyond, during and by the dance. Oscar was affected too, let us not forget.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

I have to admit, my pal Chris (Romano) has a legit complaint about the current ambiance of the letter column. Way too much sucking up to the president, (jeez, as if you needed *praise* or something. You already have our money!) an over-abundance of dopey humor, (something *I* never resorted to in *my* letterhacking days) and worst of all endless complaining about personal lives, (or the lack thereof).

C'mon!! How would you all like it if I took up a full page or more, whining about *my* life? Is this what y'all plop down your $2.25 a month for? True-fucking-Confessions? I mean, what possible interest is it to any CEREBUS fan that I've recently become a victim of office politics and lost my job and am having one helluva time trying to find another? Yeah, I had this boss: One of those guys that you just KNOW was picked on mercilessly all throughout school until one day he swore to himself, "That's it! I'm tired of being known as 'Stinky!' I'll be a BOSS, and I can make the rest of humanity as miserable as I am, in my pathetic little naked mole-rat existence!" Time passes, and through trickery he achieves his goal. He kicks out everybody that doesn't stroke his ego (I wasn't the only one) and replaces them all with his own buddies and yes-men. *Stinky Triumphant!* (Anybody who's been there knows this isn't as far-fetched as it sounds). But, alas, it's been nearly three months that I've been pounding the pavement now. You'd think I'd stop doing that and look for work already, eh? I mean, it's only a recession, right?

And what about all the time and expense, poor wretch that I am, put into trying to break into the writing business? I mean, excuse me for not having a British accent, but when was the last time you saw a new American scripter, (who wasn't an artist besides), make his debut in a top flight comic series? These guys must work for potatoes or something. How come The Beast 666 never has an American Town with Funny Names talent search? Because Warner's is picking up the tab for U.K. vacations, thass why! Double-HA! Or HA-HA, if you prefer. But this is why you no longer see talent like Fredrick Brown or Robert Sheckley anymore, because there's no place for them to go. The pulps are gone, the comics industry is locked up tighter than the underwear Nevelow used to sell before he conned his way into Piranha Press, and all the independant companies where one could get a foot in the door are out of existence, or into soft core porn, which to paraphrase Malzberg, any two-bit hack could scribe. Say Dave, ever think of publishing a self-help guide to starting your own comics company?

I could complain about the lawsuit I'm currently involved in, where, without going into too many boring details, this bitch, who would make a worthy Cirinist, is trying to steal from me over $1200 that is in no way rightfully or ethically hers. Yeah, I tried to be a civilized gentleman about it at first. I called her up and tried to explain in a slow, rational manner, that bringing lawyers into a situation that is totally insane and pointless to begin with, would just cost us both a lot of time and money best spent on more worthwhile pursuits. But it was like trying to reason with a ceramic frog. For some reason, certain loonies just love to make life difficult for others. I don't pretend to understand why. But just the thought of paying a lawyer $200 to write a letter, *a fucking letter that his secretary types up for him, for Christ sakes* . . . it boggles the mind! And that's just for starters!

And then there's my health. Gawd, I haven't had a decent night's sleep in weeks. I've got a cold that won't go away, dark circles under my eyes, permanent five o'clock shadow, and a mind that grows ever more erratic. I can't even afford to be an alcoholic or drug abuser, no, I managed all of this on my own. And do you know it's been over a *week* since *I* last got laid!? Can you *imagine* that?! Over a WEEK!!! Lo, these are indeed the end times.

And what about TWIN PEAKS? The only goddamn show on TV that's actually worth not only sitting through commercials for, but for cutting them out while taping the entire series, too. And this is despite the fact that they first moved it to late Saturday nights, then started skipping one-two weeks between episodes, then took it off for over a month, then moved it back to Thursday night again, then waited until the last two shows of the season to yank if off AGAIN . . . but hey, in my area, WHO'S THE BOSS is on 3 times a day, and if that isn't entertainment, then you tell me what is.

I could bleed for you more.

I could tell you about this guy that I really idolized when I was a kid. (No name please, why give him an undeserved plug). A dude who is always harping on ethics and doing the honorable thing and not screwing anyone over, and who, in his latest artistic release, had cut out a large segment of *what was advertised as the complete work.* This segment, of course, was only available in the special/rare/limited overpriced edition. And when I dared to raise my voice to him on how unethical this seemed, he *did* make good on it and refunded my money . . . I'll give him that. But not without a temper tantrum with infantile name-calling worthy of a disturbed five year old. Jesus, it was really sad. I mean, the guy *knew* it was a shitty situation on his part, otherwise he never would've sent the refund. That was bad enough. But to lay into somebody for following the same so-called philosophy he preaches . . . I guess when he strikes terror into the hearts of evil-doers, it's okay. He's the hero. But if anybody calls *him* out for an error in judgement, that person's a lamebrain asshole. Anyway, I mention this story as a warning to anyone out there who looks up to ANY media figure as someone to emulate: Fuck it. Just put trust in yourself. Nine times out of ten, you're probably more well-adjusted than he or she.

Yeah, as I said before, I could whine, bitch and complain, too, but I'm not going to do that (much). Because I have a better idea. Yes indeed. To wit: Instead of all the adolescent bawling we've been enduring lately, how about a forum where we can sit back and make money off of each other? That's right. After all, if you're going to lay down $2+ for eight pages of letters, the least you could do is put it to use for buying and selling. So, with that in mind, I'm looking for the following records/CD's:

THE DURUTTI COLUMN 7" "I Get Along Without You Very Well"

THE DURUTTI COLUMN CD Single "Womad Live"

THE STOCKHOLM MONSTERS LP "Alma Mater"

THE FRENCH IMPRESSIONISTS LP "French Impressionists"

Cash or trade. The floor's open.

Unless of course, Dave demands his cut . . .

Sincerely yours;

Mark Haden Frazer
W39700 Sunnyfield Drive
Oconomowoc, WI
USA 53066

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Yeah, Yeah, I know. I shouldn't be sending tee-shirts to people I don't know, but hey! What the heck. I saw it and thought of *Melmoth.* Hope you might enjoy it. (Although, it goes without saying that you draw a better Oscar).

On another note, (the story, that is), I do believe that your artwork improves by the issue. It is getting to be quite magnificent. Gerhard, the backgrounds from Melmoth Five are incredible! Particularly the Cerebus-is-still-sleepy pages. The little woman says to tell you that the cover of Melmoth Two is beautiful. (So there, I told you.)

On a completely different subject, this feminist thing seems to be getting out of control, no? And I have to strongly disagree with Pat McEown's ('Aardvark Comment–Mar 1991') ' "toeing the line" of sexism and misogyny' comment. (Too many symbols in one sentence, eh?) Or for that matter the 'sell out/buy in' comment. But hey! Everyone is entitled to their own opinions.

Question About The Ordering of 'Cerebus' Subscriptions: Are the issues shipped the same time they are shipped to the distributors, or the same time the distributors ship to the shops. More simply, do subscribers get the issues first?

Keep up the good work, and I hope you like the shirt.

Patrick Lakey
1919 Burton Drive #253-B
Austin, TX
USA 78741

P.S. It's good to see Cerebus back in the pages.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave -

Got a letter from a guy the other day who ordered a BRAIN CANCER #6 from me. It was this three page thing commenting on my editorial for that issue. Basically, he wasn't sure what I meant by some of the stuff that I said and just wanted me to clarify some things for him if I could. The letter was real polite and at the end of it he wanted me to know that he was still on my side. He also sent me some money for BC#7. I wrote him back and told him that I thought it was great that he had something on his mind that bugged him about my work and that he would take time to discuss it with me. I said I didn't care if he was on my side or not, just that he wouldn't let these things bother him without telling me about it. So I sent him his #7 and the first issue of BYOKI because I figured he deserved it.

I wish more people would do that, you know, tell me what bugs them about my stuff.

Anyway, here's the second issue of

BYOKI. Just got Cerebus #145. I was going to write and tell you that I thought it might be time for Cerebus to get a good dusting. Thanks for taking care of that.

Later,

Mike

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

I am writing to thank you for your personal reply to my letter to you. It's nice to know that the president of a fairly big (I estimate) comics company would take the time and expense to send one to a lowly reader such as myself. Needless to say, the fact that you read my letter and replied to it give me a feeling of significance, that I am more than a mere sales figure.

My letter, if you can recall, was expressing concern that your "Aardvark comment" section of Cerebus was encroaching upon the rest of the comic, therefore crowding out space for stories. Your reply assured me that that wasn't the case. Good. My letter also complained that you printed a lot of stupid letters that I feel are wasted space, and your reply gave the impression that you thought I was being stuck-up. I don't think that I am. After all, other people had already written in and said the same things I did, and I wrote in to support their opinions. The letters I dislike aren't the ones that express opinions I disagree with, but the ones where people write in and say any idiotic things that come to their minds, or talk about their personal sexual or drug experiences. Do the rest of your readers really want to see *that* in Cerebus? If they do, then they do, but I'd be surprised if that were the case.

Myself, I can live without reading the "Aardvark Comment" section and sticking to the stories. *Melmoth* is good, and I agree totally with Oscar's statement (in #140) about dissent. I myself get weary of the way political and social causes are suddenly hyped up to an enormous degree, bandied about like they are so important that the future of the human race depends on them, and just as suddenly die out, to be replaced by some new cause which is treated the exact same way. When I was a child growing up in the 1970's, I remember constantly hearing about how the Earth was going to run out of petroleum in the next few years. Being a naive little child, I believed that. Then later on I heard about the oil glut. The *what?* We were supposed to be *running out* of oil! And I read that the Mideast oil companies have enough oil to supply the world at current consumption levels for the next thousand years. Then came the big hysteria over the possibility of nuclear war. That vanished into thin air when it became apparent that a nuclear war is as likely as a Harold Stassen presidency. Now comes the ridiculous hype over the "greenhouse effect", which has been shown by NASA to be nonexistent, and over AIDS, which affects far fewer people than many other less-hyped but deadly afflictions such as cancer and heart failure. Certainly someone who isn't a homosexual or drug user can get AIDS, just as a man can get breast cancer. Needless to say, I have little respect for dissenters with their fly-by-night social causes.

Well, I hope I haven't bored you. You can treat my letters as you like—they have served their purpose. My first one was meant to express my dislike for many of the letters I see in "Aardvark Comment" that I find just plain stupid, and this one is to thank you for your interest in my comments, and to clarify my earlier letter, and to express what I thought after reading *Melmoth*.

Sincerely,

Thomas Q. Radigan
264 Addison Road
Riverside, IL
USA 60546-2039

P.S. In my basement I found a 1962 college periodical titled *The Aardvark*, and since Cerebus is an aardvark I just had to show it to you. But I wasn't going to mail the whole thing over to you so I settled for photocopying the first few pages and mailing them to you. Sorry about the lousy copy quality — I hope they are legible.

★★★★★★★★★★

dear dave

(impetuous laughter cascades from the gods themselves, as our protagonist drownes in eerie destitution).

arent you horridly disgusted at the general state of affairs surrounding us (at the fact that there has to actually be a "state of affairs"). how utterly ridiculous are our feeble attempts at happiness. how utterly depressing are our methods of salvaging such deranged happiness.

look at society, or more specifically, authority. one must be unbelievably ignorant to accept authority as a necessary, or better yet, beneficial instrument. wilde knows indeed. im sure you've check out "soul of man under socialism" and the meat (it disgusts me to no end to use that word) of "de profundis" oscar, more than any other writer ive come across, has the clearest understanding of such familiar topics as: christ, society, art and self-realization.

la de da la da.

ya know, we could all use this as some sort of matchmaking tool. alright, lets begin . . .

I am desperately infatuated by music, books and film, that, as their prime purpose, produce intense feeling, dark as beautiful and necessary as light. right now, as i am constructing this horrifyingly tacky letter, i am listening to joy division's closer l.p.

my bloody valentine make me die in premortal ecstacy. the cure (i hate to say that name which conjures up notions of trendy alternative punk mutations . . .) faith l.p. is a work of pure grey genious. galaxie 500. ride. pale saints. close lobsters. opal . . . and unregretably, unembarrassingly, the smiths. and in the writer/poet category . . .

notably the divine providence of the unendingly misunderstood; oscar f.o.w. wilde. camus. salinger. kanzanzakis. kundera. samuel shepard. rimbaud. heathcote williams . . . etc.

next . . . (oh, and im a vegan and as you may have concluded, an anarchrist, but a peaceful one.)

james dean. michael stipe. robert deniro. jesus "christ" . . .

well, that should do it, who wants to fall in love with me? if you are into even a bit of these various things/people, then . . . well . . . ya know. lets go live in a field or something. write me and we can start a new country up.

well, so much for the classified cerebus dating column.

anyway, on to more redundant things . . .

do you believe in ghosts? thats kind of a stupid question, their existence is public now. anyway, my patient and undeniably unstable readers, i have seen a few "appariticonal inhabitants" in the past years. of course you think im lying, well why wouldn't you, considering this letter so far has been a complete, ostentatious, joke so far, but seriously, i swear. no kidding, really no, kidding, no-kidding. (you definitely probably now think im

kidding, but actually what im about to say is the truth.) i woke up and saw wilde by my bed. silhouetted and real. anyway, its 3:32 am now and im beginning to get a little tired. heres a poem in reverence of that great mystical, mythical, monolithical aardvark? we have all come to kind of know and most definitely love as much as our own sour and timelessly time ridden reflections . . .

etherial grey devotions seduce
the wanton world into desperate
submission and . . . forever
revelations of its cenobitic
secrets . . . aye.

in all due respect. steven morrissey

401 Laurel Lane
Jeffersonville, PA
USA 19403

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave Sim,

I reluctantly followed my husband into the comic shop. Not that I'm not interested in comics, but I always feel a bit uneasy among the mass of adolescent male humanity who frequent such establishments. I'm not sure why that is, but I think it has something to do with glands.

So I made my way, shoulders hunched, toward the back of the shop to a safe corner. I tried to look nonchalant, and pretended to look around. And that's when I saw it. The familiar flabby visage of the dying Oscar Wilde depicted on the cover of a comic book. Can't be, thought I. 'Melmoth Four', read the title. Must be, decided I. I was more curious than inhibited, so I picked the book up. Yes, here were the last days of dear Oscar's life, played out upon the pages of a comic book that I had (honestly) always intended to check out. Really.

I brought the book home and read it. I was pleased. Along with the sensitive handling of Wilde's tragic last few weeks, it contained these interesting and amusing glimpses of an (apparently) catatonic aardvark. Also amusing were the pages and pages of letters from your readers, most of which had little or nothing to do with the comic book itself. They seem to trust you, your readers: otherwise, why would they pour out so freely the contents of their hearts and minds? Why would I, for that matter? However . . .

I loved Oscar Wilde when I was in high school. For me, the fascination his works held was only secondary to the brilliant story of his life. I became a bit obsessed, and this worried my friends, who, like me, were screaming fans of rock and roll music. Who ever heard of literature groupies? Besides, the guy had been dead for years, right? But so had Jim Morrison. And now they're *both* buried in Pere Lachaise . . . *(coincidence?????? I think not)*

When I think of Oscar Wilde now, I think of censorship and ignorance. Not because Wilde's works themselves were censored, but because of society's inability to deal with his homosexuality, and all the crummy, senseless things that had to happen to a sensitive person in a world of philistines. I hate to sentimentalize it all, but you can just imagine the horror that 19th century prisons must have held for someone like Wilde? 'Suffering for one's art' has become a cliche, but it's not all bullshit. (Yet whenever I hear that phrase, I think of the Monkees episode in which Peter becomes a painter and gets kidnapped by hoodlums: when the other guys find him bound and gagged, he claims to be suffering for his art!)

Anyway, I've hunted down 'Melmoth' numbers zero through six, and I'm still not clear on a few points, but I'm sure that it's because of all 'that which has gone before', and I'll have to go back further if I want the whole story. (What's a cirinist, for example? . . .) I really like the art, too, especially the beautiful covers. And the letters.

Sincerely,

Janis Van Court
407 Elm Street
Rome, NY
USA 13440

P.S. In case you're really interested, I'm listening to Elvis Costello's new release, 'Mighty Like A Rose", as I write this. Why don't people appreciate Elvis more (or anymore)? He's one of a handful of truly intelligent rock and roll artists still with us today.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Ger and Dave,

I finally got hold of the reprint of issue 56 last week, so I have a complete collection of reprints and originals so I read the lot in two sittings. This is the first time I've read *Church and State* forwards (I read what I could when I got it when I was collecting the back issues). I've read the final issues with the judge several times and they still blow me away. One point, if the void is tarim and the universe is the remains of terim then we are all *a part* of Terim.

In an earlier note from the president you said there would be nine books, *Melmoth* is book 5, so what are the others going to be called?

Jaka's Story was excellent and *Melmoth* is shaping up well but it is all so frustrating. Reading Cerebus every month is like being given five pages of your favourite novel every month.

What are you going to do after issue 300? What is Gerhard going to do after issue 300? How about turning Cerebus into Aardvark Comment after issue 300 so we'll have 30 pages of letters and a preview.

Answer the letters in the letters page again will you, I won't give a flying fuck what you say so don't worry about intimidating us.

Plug of the month goes to the 'escape bookshop' in the Harris Arcade reading, which stocks Cerebus a plenty and doesn't hide it in a corner. When you see women in comic shops 90% of the time they are only there because their boyfriends buy comics. They always have a look of embarrassment and worry in case they are seen. Pisses me off.

And now the biggie, abortion. *Only* the woman should have any say on whether they abort or carry a child. The man may have supplied 50% of the genetic material but it's us women who have to do 100% of the hard work. Really however each couple should try to keep to one kid. This is what the chinese government is doing, they are not doing it by draconian laws but by incentives to families with only one kid. I heard somewhere that this planet could feed eight billion people if its resources were distributed equally, which of course won't happen. We are only at about 5-1/2 billion and about 1-1/2 billion are starving and all the charities in the world won't even dent that.

Hugs and kisses,

Denise Patrick
18 Geoffreyson
Caversham, Reading
Berkshire, RG4 7HS
United Kingdom

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Get me out of here! Get me out of Quebec! I can't take it any longer! AAAAARGH!

Yes Dave, I have to admit it, I am a Quebecker. I have to face this grim reality 7 days a week and 365 days a year. As soon as I get a diploma and

a decent job far from Quebec, it's goodbye, adios, sayyonara, see you later, take it easy and FUCK YOU!

Most Quebeckers are egocentric. They have no respect for other cultures (especially english-speaking ones) and they think that their culture is the top, that they are superior. "Fuck you! You're just a bloke! Everything you say is stupid . . . you're an idiot, a vegetable, a necrophiliac just like all the others. Go home! Go back to Ontario! Leave us alone!" This is just a sample of the idiotic comments that get thrown at my face in Frog school.

Here's an example, it's also a true story—October 1990—Our french teacher tells us: "I want each of you to prepare a speech that will give us your opinion on whether Quebec should separate from Canada or not?" 2 days later, one student comes up to the front of the class clutching a box of kleenex in his hands.

After his speech, he pulls out a Canadian Flag from this box and invites all the students to come up and stomp on the flag . . . AND THEY DO! THEY DO! . . . . How would you feel being the only one in your class who refuses to stomp on your OWN flag? The flag that represents your nation? How would you feel? Huh? Huh?

Although, you may have trouble believing it, there are some nice things to be said about Quebeckers. Most of them can be kind, tender, gentle, loving, considerate, charitable, pleasant, helpful and generous (when you don't talk about politics).

QUEBEC: A nice place to visit, but you wouldn't want to live here! AMEN!

Psycho Pat
St. Foy, Quebec

P.S. If you ever decide to print this letter, don't print my street address. I wouldn't want some frog to stick a bomb in my mailbox like they used to do in the early 70's.

P.P.S. R.E.M. A-HA, Tears for Fears, Michael Penn, Peter Gabriel.

P.P.P.S. I don't know if I should tell you this because it sounds sort of nerdy but I guess you should know (please don't get pissed off at me). In *Jaka's Story* –page 324– "o danseuse brillant" should be "o danseuse brillante" since the "danseuse" is a woman, and "ne vouse en fais pas" should be "ne vous en faites pas". Apart from these two mistakes, *Jaka's Story* is the best Novel that I have ever read . . . you're an artist, a genius! The literary master of the universe!

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I realize that in my first letter I may have been a bit harsh towards the French-Canadian population being as how their political opinions differ from mine. I don't believe that anglophones are superior to francophones or vice-versa. I believe that all races are equal and that people should have the right to express themselves in any language they want. Unfortunately, it seems that the government doesn't agree with me. For example: There are some municipalities in Montreal that are 80% english-speaking and yet the law obliges that all commercial establishments should put up signs in French only! (Bill #178. French only outside, Bilingual inside) The same things happen in Ontario, for example: The city of Sault Ste. Marie declared itself Unilingual and "english speaking" in 1989 (1990?) even though a small fraction of the population is french speaking. Both examples represent injustice towards a minority.

In other words: The French hate the English and the English hate the French. Since I'm 50% french and 50% english I hope that all this language business can be resolved and we can move on to more important things (like the economy).

Two weeks ago I went to Ottawa with our school and I was surprised to see how bilingual the city was. The french got along with the english and the english got along with the french. WOW! This is how I hope all of Canada will be someday, but it probably won't since Quebec is most likely going to separate from the rest of Canada in the near future. (and face grave economic consequences).

The Canadian Flag story from my previous letter is true. I don't want you to think that our french teacher approved of what the students were doing to the flag; he tried to stop them but was unsuccessful.

Sincerely,

Psycho Pat
Quebec, Canada

★★★★★★★★★★

DAVE SIM

and

GERHARD

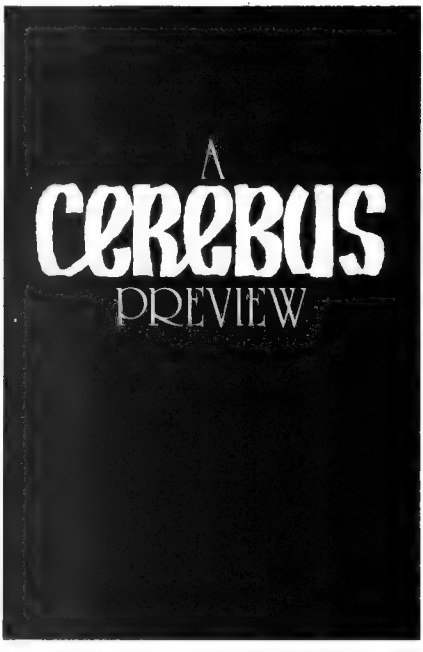
will be

at

UNICORN COMICS
438 King St. West
Oshawa, Ontario
(416) 723-7212

August 24, 1991

2–4 p.m.



Mike Canich does a fanzine called *Brain Cancer* and another one called *BYOKI*. I really like both of them. He reviews concerts and albums; talks about stuff off the top of his head. Even when he's talking about things I know and/or care nothing about, I really enjoy reading him.

This here's his 24 hour comic which appeared in *Brain Cancer* #7. None of the cut-off points I tried did the story justice so I've printed *almost* the whole thing. I hope you'll order *Brain Cancer* #7 (two dollars cheque or money order or ten dollars for a six issue subscription from Mike Canich Box 31 Romeo, Michigan 48065) to read the rest of it.

Ladies and gentlemen the world record holder for fastest twenty-four page-comic story at a little more than seven hours, Mr. Mike Canich and a charming little tale called . . .

SHUT UP, I'M NOT TALKING TO YOU

OR MY GOD, I CAN'T FEEL THE FINGERS ON MY RIGHT HAND!

A TALE WRITTEN AND DRAWN BY MIKE CANICH IN A LITTLE OVER SEVEN HOURS -1991-

Sunday
January 26
1:56 pm – 9:01 pm

I LIVE IN A VACUUM.

OKAY. SO MAYBE I DON'T REALLY LIVE IN A VACUUM.

MAYBE I JUST THINK I LIVE IN A VACUUM.

MAYBE

WHAT I AM

IS CONFUSED.

ALRIGHT.

THAT'S IT, THEN.

I'M JUST CONFUSED.

SOMETIMES I HAVE A FACE.

AND SOMETIMES IT'S HAPPY.

SOMETIMES IT'S SAD.

BUT MOST OF THE TIME

I PREFER TO NOT HAVE A FACE AT ALL.

IT'S EASIER

I THINK

TO NOT HAVE A FACE.

MUCH MUCH EASIER

BUT DON'T THINK THAT I TRY TO HIDE FROM MY FEELINGS.

NO, NO.

IT'S NOT THAT WAY AT ALL.

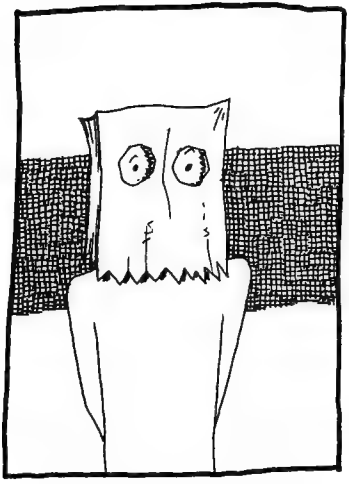
SOMETIMES, IT'S JUST THAT FEELINGS ONLY COMPLICATE THE BUSINESS AT HAND.

THINGS SHOULD NEVER BE COMPLICATED.

THEY SHOULD BE EASY.

SIMPLE.

JUST SLIDE RIGHT THROUGH.



ZIP. THERE YOU ARE.

THE OTHER SIDE.

I'VE SEEN PEOPLE—I'VE <u>KNOWN</u> PEOPLE—WHO'VE LET THEIR FEELINGS GET THE BEST OF THEM. I'VE SEEN THE WAY THEY'VE ACTED.

LIKE COMPLETE FUCKING IDIOTS.

I MEAN, IT'S <u>EMBARRASSING</u>.

"MY DOG GOT RUN OVER BY A CAR."

"MY MOTHER DIED."

"SOMEONE STOLE MY BRAND NEW CAR."

BOO
FUCKING
HOO

OR, THE OTHER SIDE:

"MY WIFE'S PREGNANT! I HOPE IT'S A BOY!"

"I GOT A RAISE!"

"YOU'LL MARRY ME?"

YIPPEE.

GLAD TO SEE IT. GLAD TO HEAR IT. GLAD TO FEEL IT.

CAN I BUM A SMOKE?

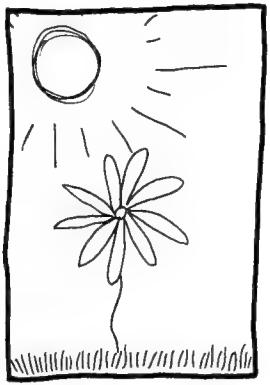
DON'T YOU HAVE ANYTHING BETTER TO DO?

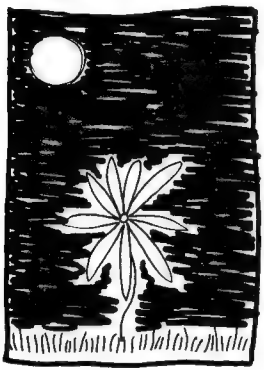
IGNORE THEIR FACES.

THAT'S WHAT I SAY.

THEY'RE STUCK.

THEY WANT TO GET OUT.





I KNEW A GUY WHO WAS MARRIED. MARRIED FOR SIXTEEN YEARS TO THIS WOMAN THAT HE LOVED VERY MUCH. THEY HAD THREE CHILDREN TOGETHER. TWO BOYS AND A GIRL. THESE CHILDREN WERE ACADEMICALLY ASTUTE AND MADE THEIR PARENTS VERY PROUD. AFTER SIXTEEN YEARS OF MARRIAGE THE GUY FOUND OUT THAT HIS BELOVED WIFE HAD BEEN FUCKING SOMEONE ELSE FOR THREE YEARS, OFF AND ON. THIS GUY KNEW THE OTHER MAN. IT WAS HIS OLDER BROTHER. SO YOU FIGURE THIS GUY WAS STEAMED, RIGHT? I MEAN, HE THOUGHT THAT EVEN AFTER SIXTEEN YEARS AND THREE KIDS THAT HIS MARRIAGE WAS AS PERFECT AS THE WEDDING DAY.

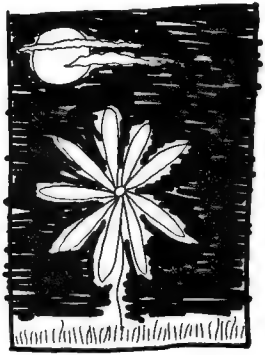
SLAP.
NOT FUCKING QUITE.

SO THIS GUY GOT ANGRY. PISSED. HE WENT OFF. HE WAITED IN THE BEDROOM UNTIL HIS WIFE GOT HOME FROM GROCERY SHOPPING, THE KIDS WERE OUT WITH THEIR FRIENDS. HE WAS ALL ALONE. AFTER ABOUT AN HOUR, HIS WIFE WALKS INTO THE BEDROOM.

"HELLO, DEAR. WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP HERE? I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO WORK ON THE CAR TODAY."

"I WAS WAITING FOR YOU. I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU."

"OH? WHAT ABOUT?"



"ABOUT YOU. ABOUT ME."

SHE KNEW SOMETHING WAS WRONG, JUST BY THE WAY HE WAS LOOKING AT HER.

"DO YOU STILL LOVE ME?"

"OF COURSE I DO."

"I'M SERIOUS. DO YOU LOVE ME?"

"AND I'M SERIOUS. I DO LOVE YOU. IF I DIDN'T LOVE YOU, THEN I WOULDN'T BE MARRIED TO YOU."

HE LOOKED HER OVER. SHE WAS STILL A STRIKING WOMAN. EVEN AFTER GIVING BIRTH TO THREE KIDS. NOT ONCE HAD HE EVER THOUGHT ABOUT CHEATING ON HER. NOT ONCE.

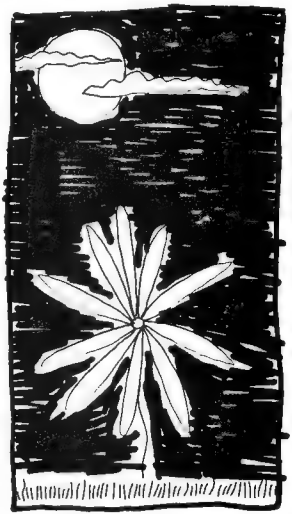
"HAVE I DONE SOMETHING WRONG?"

SHE LOOKED PUZZLED.

"SOMETHING WRONG?"

SHE WENT TO HIS SIDE AT THE BED. SHE PUT HER HAND ON HIS.

HE WOULDN'T LOOK AT HER. HE JUST STARED AT THE WHITE CARPETING.



"HAVE I FAILED YOU IN SOME WAY? AM I LOUSY FATHER? A LOUSY LOVER?"

"YOU'RE A GREAT FATHER. AND YOU'RE A FANTASTIC LOVER. YOU'RE KIND, YOU'RE GENTLE, YOU'RE -"

HE STOOD UP.
HE STILL REFUSED TO LOOK AT HER.
BUT HE KEPT COOL.

"I LOVE YOU... I LOVE YOU SO MUCH... YOU'RE THE ONLY WOMAN WHO'S EVER MADE ME FEEL WANTED..."

"HONEY, WHAT'S WRONG? WHAT'S -"

"THAT FIRST TIME WE MADE LOVE... I WAS SO SCARED... I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO AND YOU... YOU WERE SO HELPFUL... YOU DIDN'T LAUGH AT ME..."

SHE WAS GROWING AFRAID, SOMETHING INSIDE OF HER WAS TELLING HER THAT ALL WAS NOT RIGHT.

DOES HE KNOW? SHE THOUGHT

"WHY WOULD YOU DO THIS TO ME?"

THE AIR BECAME STRANGE BETWEEN THEM. NOW SHE KNEW THAT HE KNEW ALL ABOUT IT.

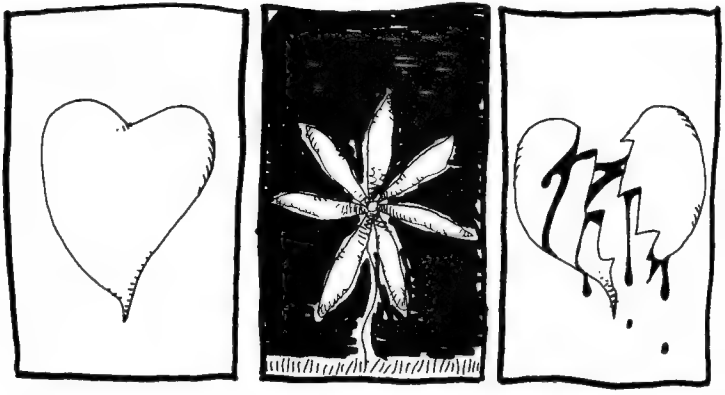
THAT HE HAD FOUND OUT.

"WH- WHAT—"

"BITCH... YOU FUCKING BITCH..."

HER BODY BECAME TENSE. SHE WAS FIGHTING THE URGE TO BREAK DOWN INTO TEARS.

HE TURNED QUICKLY TOWARDS HER.



"YOU BITCH!"

"HONEY—"

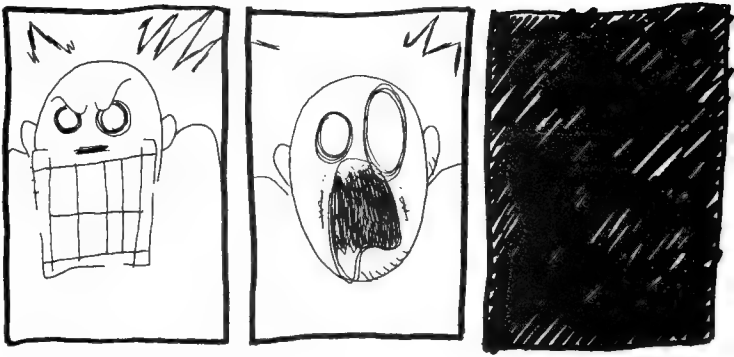
"HOW COULD YOU? HOW COULD YOU FUCK HIM? AFTER ALL I'VE DONE FOR YOU! AFTER ALL I'VE GIVEN TO YOU! HOW COULD YOU DO THIS TO ME ... TO YOUR CHILDREN!"

HIS FISTS WERE CLENCHED.

SHE FELT SO MUCH TERROR. SHE BEGAN TO CRY AND SHE PUT HER FACE IN HER HANDS.

"I'M SORRY... I'M SORRY..."

THAT'S WHEN HE STRUCK HER. THAT'S WHEN HE BEAT HER. THAT'S WHEN HE BEAT HER TO A BLOODY FUCKING PULP THAT GODDAMN FUCKING CUNT WHORE BITCH YOU FUCKING SLUT GODDAMN YOU GOD FUCKING DAMN YOU TO HELL BITCH YOU CUNT I HOPE YOU FRY I HOPE YOU FUCKING



HUH.

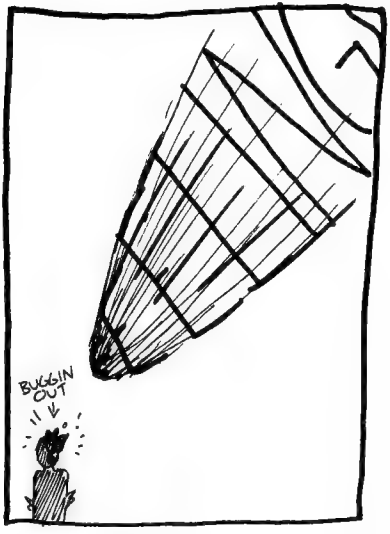
YOU KNOW. JUST LIKE THAT. THIS GUY, YOU KNOW...

...HE...

SOMETIMES PEOPLE GO OFF.

THEY LET THEIR FEELINGS GET AHEAD OF THEM.

THEY LET THEM TAKE OVER.



AND THAT GETS THEM INTO TROUBLE.

SEE.

THE GUY, YOU KNOW, HE DIDN'T KILL HER.

HE FUCKED HER UP PRETTY BADLY.

BUT HE DIDN'T KILL HER.

HE WANTED TO. DEEP DOWN INSIDE THERE WAS THIS LITTLE VOICE SAYING:

DO IT. KILL HER.

HE DIDN'T.

HE THOUGHT:

SHE'S NOT WORTH THE TIME IN JAIL.

BUT, STILL...

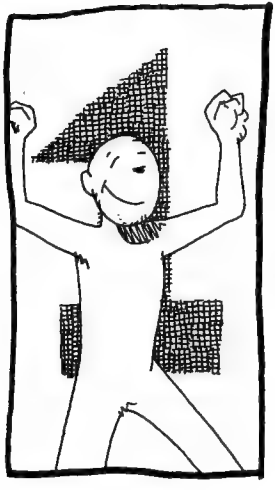
... HIS FEELINGS.

HIS EMOTIONS.

HIS ENTIRE BEING.

CRUSHED.

AND HE LET OFF HIS STEAM. HE WENT FOR IT.



HE SHOOTS.

HE SCORES.

THE CROWD GOES WILD.

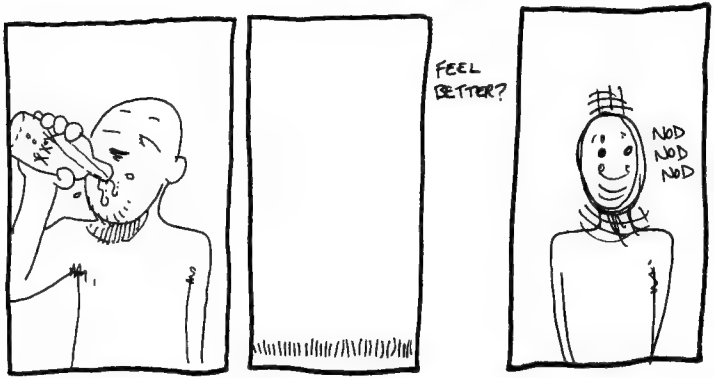
APPLAUSE.
APPLAUSE.
CHEER.
CHEER.
APPLAUSE.

NOW GRAB YOUR GATORADE.

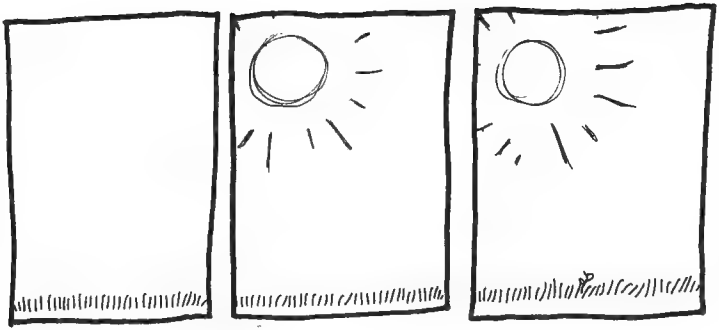
BUT SO WHAT? HE WENT TO JAIL ANYWAY. THEY FUCKING LOCKED HIM UP BECAUSE HE SHOWED HIS TRUE FEELINGS. HE LET THEM GO. AND THEY GRABBED HIM. BEAT HIM UP.

JUST GOES TO SHOW THAT IT'S BETTER TO BOTTLE UP.

OR, BETTER YET, HIT THE BOTTLE.



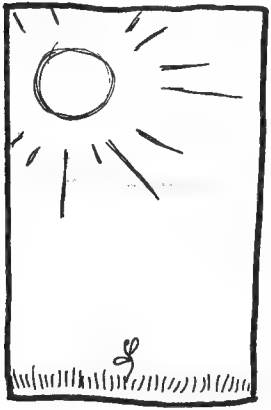
GOOD. LET'S GET ON WITH IT.



MOVE EVERYTHING ASIDE.
TAKE A DEEP BREATH.

IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY ISN'T IT ?

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A DAY MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THIS?



BIRDS ARE SINGING.

CHILDREN ARE PLAYING.

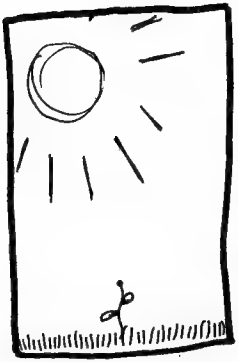
HAPPINESS

IS

IN

THE

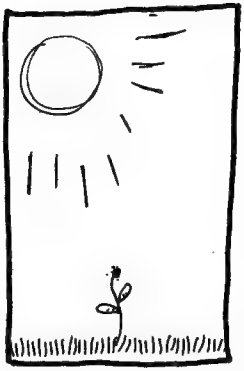
AIR.



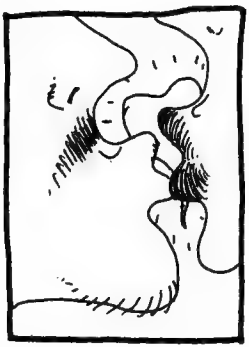
TIP TOE
THROUGH THE TULIPS

SIGH.

BREATHE IN THE SWEET
PURE
AIR.
SIGH.



AH, MY LOVE
OH, THERE IS NO ONE MORE PRECIOUS THAN YOU!



GODDAMN I FEEL GOOD!

EVERYTHING IS PERFECT. SO UNCLUTTERED. PLACED JUST RIGHT.

YOUR TROUBLES JUST FLOAT AWAY.

DUM DUM DEE DUM DEE DUM
DUM DUM DUM DEE DEE DUM
DA DUM DA DUM

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

HA

HA HA HA

HA

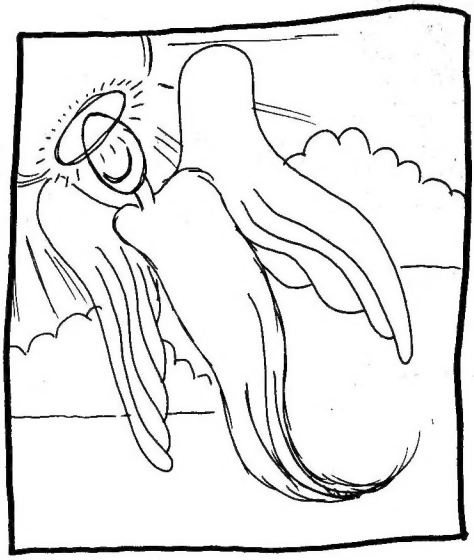
HA

WHERE DO YOU WANT ME TO TOUCH YOU NEXT? THERE? OR... THERE? YEAH? OKAY, NOW WE'RE GETTING SOMEWHERE. NOW WE CAN GET DOWN TO SOME SERIOUS BUSINESS. OH YEAH. OH YEAH. JESUS, YOU KNOW WHAT I LIKE. YEAH. YEAH. OH GOD.

ETC....

THE FLOWERS BLOOM THE SUN IS SHINING
IT'S A NICE DAY TO FALL IN LOVE

HALLELUJAH.
PRAISE JESUS.
PRAISE ALLAH,
OR ELVIS.
WHOEVER.



PEACE.
LOVE.
HAPPINESS.
LOVE THY BROTHER.
LOVE THY SISTER.

ARE YOU GETTING ALL THIS?
IS THIS MAKING ANY SENSE TO YOU?

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